

§ 16.9

(3) Written acknowledgement of the defendant or his representative.

§ 16.9 Answer.

(a) The defendant may request a hearing by filing an answer with the reviewing official within 30 days of service of the complaint. An answer shall be deemed to be a request for hearing.

(b) In the answer, the defendant—

(1) Shall admit or deny each of the allegations of liability made in the complaint;

(2) Shall state any defense on which the defendant intends to rely;

(3) May state any reasons why the defendant contends that the penalties and assessments should be less than the statutory maximum; and

(4) Shall state whether the defendant has authorized an attorney to act as defendant's representative, and shall state the name, address, and telephone number of the representative.

§ 16.10 Default upon failure to file an answer.

(a) If the defendant does not file an answer within the time prescribed in § 16.9(a), the reviewing official may refer the complaint to the ALJ for initial decision.

(b) Upon the referral of the complaint, the ALJ shall promptly serve on defendant in the manner prescribed in § 16.8, a notice that an initial decision will be issued under this section.

(c) If the defendant fails to file a timely answer, the ALJ shall assume the facts alleged in the complaint to be true and, if such facts establish liability under § 16.3, the ALJ shall issue an initial decision imposing the maximum amount of penalties and assessments allowed under the statute.

(d) Except as otherwise provided in this section, by failing to file a timely answer, the defendant waives any right to further review of the penalties and assessments imposed under paragraph (c) of this section, and the initial decision shall become final and binding upon the parties 30 days after it is issued.

(e) If, before such an initial decision becomes final, the defendant files a motion with the ALJ, and serves a copy on the agency, seeking to reopen

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on the grounds that extraordinary circumstances prevented the defendant from filing a timely answer, the initial decision shall be stayed pending the ALJ's decision on the motion. The ALJ shall permit the agency a reasonable amount of time, not less than 15 calendar days, to respond to the defendant's motion.

(f) If, on such motion, the defendant can demonstrate extraordinary circumstances excusing the failure to file a timely answer, the ALJ shall withdraw the initial decision, if such a decision has been issued pursuant to paragraph (c) of this section, and shall grant the defendant an opportunity to answer the complaint.

(g) A decision of the ALJ denying a defendant's motion under paragraph (e) of this section is not subject to reconsideration under § 16.38.

(h) The defendant may appeal to the authority head the decision denying a motion to reopen by filing a notice of appeal with the authority head within 15 days after the ALJ denies the motion. The timely filing of a notice of appeal shall stay the initial decision until the authority head decides the issue.

(i) If the defendant files a timely notice of appeal with the authority head, the ALJ shall forward the record of the proceeding to the authority head.

(j) The authority head shall decide expeditiously, and based solely on the record before the ALJ, whether extraordinary circumstances excuse the defendant's failure to file a timely answer.

(k) If the authority head decides that extraordinary circumstances excuse the defendant's failure to file a timely answer, the authority head shall remand the case to the ALJ with instructions to grant the defendant an opportunity to file an answer.

(l) If the authority head decides that the defendant's failure to file a timely answer is not excused, the authority head shall reinstate the initial decision of the ALJ, which shall become final and binding upon the parties 30 days after the authority head issues such decision.